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An Essay On The History Of Civil Society

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Part Second. Of the History of Rude Nations.

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PART SECOND.

Of the History of Rude Nations.

S E C T. I.

Of the Informations on this subject which are derived from Antiquity.

THE history of mankind is confined within a limited period, and from every quarter brings an intimation that human affairs have had a beginning. Nations, distinguished by the possession of arts, and the felicity of their political establishments, have been derived from a feeble original, and still preserve in their story the indications of a slow and gradual progress, by which this distinction was gained. The antiquities of every people, however diversified, and however disguised, contain the same information on this point.

In sacred history, we find the parents of the species, as yet a single pair, sent forth to inherit the earth, and
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to force a subsistence for themselves amidst the briers and thorns which were made to abound on its surface. Their race, which was again reduced to a few, had to struggle with the dangers that await a weak and infant species; and after many ages elapsed, the most respectable nations took their rise from one or a few families that had pastured their flocks in the desert.

THE Grecians derive their own origin from unsettled tribes, whose frequent migrations are a proof of the rude and infant state of their communities; and whose warlike exploits, so much celebrated in story, only exhibit the struggles with which they disputed for the possession of a country they afterwards, by their talent for fable, by their arts, and their policy, rendered so famous in the history of mankind.

ITALY must have been divided into many rude and feeble cantons, when a band of robbers, as we are taught to consider them, found a secure settlement on the banks of the Tiber, and when a people, yet composed only of one sex, sustained the character of a nation. Rome, for many ages, saw, from her walls, on every side, the territory of her enemies, and found as little to check or to stifle the weakness of her infant power, as she did afterwards to restrain the progress of her extended empire. Like a Tartar or a Scythian horde, which had pitched on a settlement, this nascent community was equal, if not superior, to every tribe in its neighbourhood; and the oak which has covered the field with

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its shade, was once a feeble plant in the nursery, and not to be distinguished from the weeds by which its early growth was restrained.

THE Gauls and the Germans are come to our knowledge with the marks of a similar condition; and the inhabitants of Britain, at the time of the first Roman invasions, resembled, in many things, the present natives of North America: they were ignorant of agriculture; they painted their bodies; and used for cloathing, the skins of beasts.

SUCH therefore appears to have been the commencement of history with all nations, and in such circumstances are we to look for the original character of mankind. The inquiry refers to a distant period, and every conclusion should build on the facts which are preserved for our use. Our method, notwithstanding, too frequently, is to rest the whole on conjecture; to impute every advantage of our nature to those arts which we ourselves possess; and to imagine, that a mere negation of all our virtues is a sufficient description of man in his original state. We are ourselves the supposed standards of politeness and civilization; and where our own features do not appear, we apprehend, that there is nothing which deserves to be known. But it is probable that here, as in many other cases, we are ill qualified, from our supposed knowledge of causes, to prognosticate effects, or to determine what must have been the properties and operations, even of our own nature, in the absence of those



those circumstances in which we have seen it engaged. Who would, from mere conjecture, suppose, that the naked savage would be a coxcomb and a gamester? that he would be proud and vain, without the distinctions of title and fortune? and that his principal care would be to adorn his person, and to find an amusement? Even if it could be supposed that he would thus share in our vices, and, in the midst of his forest, vie with the follies which are practised in the town; yet no one would be so bold as to affirm, that he would likewise, in any instance, excel us in talents and virtues; that he would have a penetration, a force of imagination and elocution, an ardour of mind, an affection and courage, which the arts, the discipline, and the policy of few nations would be able to improve. Yet these particulars are a part in the description which is delivered by those who have had opportunities of seeing mankind in their rudest condition: and beyond the reach of such testimony, we can neither safely take, nor pretend to give, information on the subject.

IF conjectures and opinions formed at a distance, have not sufficient authority in the history of mankind, the domestic antiquities of every nation must, for this very reason, be received with caution. They are, for most part, the mere conjectures or the fictions of subsequent ages; and even where at first they contained some resemblance of truth, they still vary with the imagination of those by whom they are transmitted, and in every generation receive a different form. They are



made to bear the stamp of the times through which they have passed in the form of tradition, not of the ages to which their pretended descriptions relate. The information they bring, is not like the light reflected from a mirror, which delineates the object from which it originally came; but, like rays that come broken and dispersed from an opaque or unpolished surface, only give the colours and features of the body from which they were last reflected.

WHEN traditionary fables are rehearsed by the vulgar, they bear the marks of a national character; and though mixed with absurdities, often raise the imagination, and move the heart: when made the materials of poetry, and adorned by the skill and the eloquence of an ardent and superior mind, they instruct the understanding, as well as engage the passions. It is only in the management of mere antiquaries, or stript of the ornaments which the laws of history forbid them to wear, that they become even unfit to amuse the fancy, or to serve any purpose whatever.

IT were absurd to quote the fable of the Iliad or the Odyssey, the legends of Hercules, Theseus, or OEdipus, as authorities in matter of fact relating to the history of mankind; but they may, with great justice, be cited to ascertain what were the conceptions and sentiments of the age in which they were composed, or to characterise the genius of that people, with whose imaginations



tions they were blended, and by whom they were fondly rehearsed and admired.

IN this manner fiction may be admitted to vouch for the genius of nations, while history has nothing to offer that is intitled to credit. The Greek fable accordingly conveying a character of its authors, throws light on an age of which no other record remains. The superiority of this people is indeed in no circumstance more evident than in the strain of their fictions, and in the story of those fabulous heroes, poets, and sages, whose tales, being invented or embellished by an imagination already filled with the subject for which the hero was celebrated, served to inflame that ardent enthusiasm with which this people afterwards proceeded in the pursuit of every national object.

IT was no doubt of great advantage to those nations, that their system of fable was original, and being already received in popular traditions, served to diffuse those improvements of reason, imagination, and sentiment, which were afterwards, by men of the finest talents, made on the fable itself, or conveyed in its moral. The passions of the poet pervaded the minds of the people, and the conceptions of men of genius being communicated to the vulgar, became the incentives of a national spirit.

A mythology borrowed from abroad, a literature founded on references to a strange country, and fraught with



with foreign allusions, are much more confined in their use: they speak to the learned alone; and though intended to inform the understanding, and to mend the heart, may, by being confined to a few, have an opposite effect: they may foster conceit on the ruins of common sense, and render what was, at least innocently, sung by the Athenian mariner at his oar, or rehearsed by the shepherd in attending his flock, an occasion of vice, and the foundation of pedantry and scholastic pride.

OUR very learning, perhaps, where its influence extends, serves, in some measure, to depress our national spirit. Our literature being derived from nations of a different race, who flourished at a time when our ancestors were in a state of barbarity, and consequently when they were despised by those who had attained to the literary arts, has given rise to a humbling opinion, that we ourselves are the offspring of mean and contemptible nations, with whom the human imagination and sentiment had no effect, till the genius was in a manner inspired by examples, and directed by lessons that were brought from abroad. The Romans, from whom our accounts are chiefly derived, have admitted, in the rudeness of their own ancestors, a system of virtues, which all simple nations perhaps equally possess; a contempt of riches, love of their country, patience of hardship, danger, and fatigue. They have, notwithstanding, vilified our ancestors for having perhaps only resembled their own; at least, in the defect of their

their arts, and in the neglect of conveniencies which those arts are employed to procure.

IT is from the Greek and the Roman historians, however, that we have not only the most authentic and instructive, but even the most engaging, representations of the tribes from whom we descend. Those sublime and intelligent writers understood human nature, and could collect its features, and exhibit its characters in every situation. They were ill succeeded in this task by the early historians of modern Europe; who, generally bred to the profession of monks, and confined to the monastic life, applied themselves to record what they were pleased to denominate facts, while they suffered the productions of genius to perish, and were unable, either by the matter they selected, or the style of their compositions, to give any representation of the active spirit of mankind in any condition. With them, a narration was supposed to constitute history, whilst it did not convey any knowledge of men; and history itself was allowed to be complete, while, amidst the events and the succession of princes that are recorded in the order of time, we are left to look in vain for those characteristics of the understanding and the heart, which alone, in every human transaction, render the story either engaging or useful.

WE therefore willingly quit the history of our early ancestors, where Cæsar and Tacitus have dropped them; and perhaps, till we come within the reach of what is connected with present affairs, and makes a part in the
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system on which we now proceed, have little reason to expect any subject to interest or inform the mind. We have no reason, however, from hence to conclude, that the matter itself was more barren, or the scene of human affairs less interesting, in modern Europe, than it has been on every stage where mankind were engaged to exhibit the movements of the heart, the efforts of generosity, magnanimity, and courage.

THE trial of what those ages contained, is not even fairly made, when men of genius and distinguished abilities, with the accomplishments of a learned and a polished age, collect the materials they have found, and, with the greatest success, connect the story of illiterate ages with transactions of a later date: it is difficult even for them, under the names which are applied in a new state of society, to convey a just apprehension of what mankind were in situations so different, and in times so remote from their own.

IN deriving from historians of this character the instruction which their writings are fit to bestow, we are frequently to forget the general terms that are employed, in order to collect the real manners of an age, from the minute circumstances that are occasionally presented. The titles of *Royal* and *Noble* were applicable to the families of Tarquin, Collatinus, and Cincinnatus; but Lucretia was employed in domestic industry with her maids, and Cincinnatus followed the plough. The dignities, and even the offices, of civil society, were known many
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ages ago, in Europe, by their present appellations; but we find in the history of England, that a king and his court being assembled to solemnize a festival, an outlaw, who had subsisted by robbery, came to share in the feast. The king himself arose to force this unworthy guest from the company, a scuffle ensued between them, and the king was killed *. A chancellor and prime minister, whose magnificence and sumptuous furniture were the subject of admiration and envy, had his apartments covered every day in winter with clean straw and hay, and in summer with green rushes or boughs. Even the sovereign himself, in those ages, was provided with forage for his bed †. These picturesque features and characteristic strokes of the times, recal the imagination from the supposed distinction of monarch and subject, to that state of rough familiarity in which our ancestors lived, and under which they acted, with a view to objects, and on principles of conduct, which we seldom comprehend, when we are employed to record their transactions, or to study their characters.

THUCYDIDES, notwithstanding the prejudice of his country against the name of *Barbarian*, understood that it was in the customs of barbarous nations he was to study the more ancient manners of Greece.

THE Romans might have found an image of their own ancestors, in the representations they have given of ours: and if ever an Arab clan shall become a civilized nation, or

* Hume's History, ch. 8. p. 278.

† Ibid. p. 73.

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any American tribe escape the poison which is administered by our traders of Europe, it may be from the relations of the present times, and the descriptions which are now given by travellers, that such a people, in after ages, may best collect the accounts of their origin. It is in their present condition, that we are to behold, as in a mirror, the features of our own progenitors; and from thence we are to draw our conclusions with respect to the influence of situations, in which, we have reason to believe, our fathers were placed.

WHAT should distinguish a German or a Briton, in the habits of his mind or his body, in his manners or apprehensions, from an American, who, like him, with his bow and his dart, is left to traverse the forest; and in a like severe or variable climate, is obliged to subsist by the chase?

If, in advanced years, we would form a just notion of our progress from the cradle, we must have recourse to the nursery, and from the example of those who are still in the period of life we mean to describe, take our representation of past manners, that cannot, in any other way, be recalled.

S E C T.



S E C T. II.

Of Rude Nations prior to the Establishment of Property.

FROM one to the other extremity of America; from Kamfchatka westward to the river Oby, and from the Northern sea, over that length of country, to the confines of China, of India, and Persia; from the Caspian to the Red sea, with little exception, and from thence over the inland continent and the western shores of Africa; we every where meet with nations on whom we bestow the appellations of barbarous or savage. That extensive tract of the earth, containing so great a variety of situation, climate, and soil, should, in the manners of its inhabitants, exhibit all the diversities which arise from the unequal influence of the sun, joined to a different nourishment and manner of life. Every question, however, on this subject is premature, till we have first endeavoured to form some general conception of our species in its rude state, and have learned to distinguish mere ignorance from dullness, and the want of arts from the want of capacity.

Of the nations who dwell in those, or any other of the less cultivated parts of the earth, some intrust their subsistence chiefly to hunting, fishing, or the natural produce of the soil. They have little attention to property, and scarcely any beginnings of subordination or government. Others having possessed themselves of herds, and

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depending for their provision on pasture, know what it is to be poor and rich. They know the relations of patron and client, of servant and master, and suffer themselves to be classed according to their measures of wealth. This distinction must create a material difference of character, and may furnish two separate heads, under which to consider the history of mankind in their rudest state; that of the savage, who is not yet acquainted with property; and that of the barbarian, to whom it is, although not ascertained by laws, a principal object of care and desire.

It must appear very evident, that property is a matter of progress. It requires, among other particulars which are the effects of time, some method of defining possession. The very desire of it proceeds from experience; and the industry by which it is gained, or improved, requires such a habit of acting with a view to distant objects, as may overcome the present disposition either to sloth or to enjoyment. This habit is slowly acquired, and is in reality a principal distinction of nations in the advanced state of mechanic and commercial arts.

IN a tribe which subsists by hunting and fishing, the arms, the utensils, and the fur, which the individual carries, are to him the only subjects of property. The food of to-morrow is yet wild in the forest, or hid in the lake; it cannot be appropriated before it is caught; and even then, being the purchase of numbers, who fish or hunt in a body, it accrues to the community, and is applied

plied to immediate use, or becomes an accession to the stores of the public.

WHERE savage nations, as in most parts of America, mix with the practice of hunting some species of rude agriculture, they still follow, with respect to the soil and the fruits of the earth, the analogy of their principal object. As the men hunt, so the women labour together; and, after they have shared the toils of the seed-time, they enjoy the fruits of the harvest in common. The field in which they have planted, like the district over which they are accustomed to hunt, is claimed as a property by the nation, but is not parcelled in lots to its members. They go forth in parties to prepare the ground, to plant, and to reap. The harvest is gathered into the public granary, and from thence, at stated times, is divided into shares for the maintenance of separate families *. Even the returns of the market, when they trade with foreigners, are brought home to the stock of the nation †.

As the fur and the bow pertain to the individual, the cabin and its utensils are appropriated to the family; and as the domestic cares are committed to the women, so the property of the household seems likewise to be vested in them. The children are considered as pertaining to the mother, with little regard to descent on the father's side. The males, before they are married, remain in the cab-

* History of the Caribbees.

† Charlevoix.



bin in which they are born; but after they have formed a new connection with the other sex, they change their habitation, and become an accession to the family in which they have found their wives. The hunter and the warrior are numbered by the matron as a part of her treasure; they are reserved for perils and trying occasions; and in the recesses of public councils, in the intervals of hunting or war, are maintained by the cares of the women, and loiter about in mere amusement or sloth *.

WHILE one sex continue to value themselves chiefly on their courage, their talent for policy, and their warlike achievements, this species of property which is bestowed on the other, is in reality a mark of subjection; not, as some writers alledge, of their having acquired an ascendant †. It is the care and trouble of a subject with which the warrior does not chuse to be embarrassed. It is a servitude, and a continual toil, where no honours are won; and they whose province it is, are in fact the slaves and the helots of their country. If in this destination of the sexes, while the men continue to indulge themselves in the contempt of sordid and mercenary arts, the cruel establishment of slavery is for some ages deferred; if in this tender, though unequal alliance, the affections of the heart prevent the severities practised on slaves; we have in the custom itself, as perhaps in many other instances, reason to prefer the first suggestions of nature, to many of her after refinements.

* Lafitau.

† Ibid.

IF mankind, in any instance, continue the article of property on the footing we have now represented, we may easily credit what is farther reported by travellers, that they admit of no distinctions of rank or condition; and that they have in fact no degree of subordination different from the distribution of function, which follows the differences of age, talents, and dispositions. Personal qualities give an ascendant in the midst of occasions which require their exertion; but in times of relaxation, leave no vestige of power or prerogative. A warrior who has led the youth of his nation to the slaughter of their enemies, or who has been foremost in the chace, returns upon a level with the rest of his tribe; and when the only business is to sleep, or to feed, can enjoy no pre-eminence; for he sleeps and he feeds no better than they.

WHERE no profit attends dominion, one party is as much averse to the trouble of perpetual command, as the other is to the mortification of perpetual submission: "I love victory, I love great actions," says Montesquieu in the character of Sylla; "but have no relish for the languid detail of pacific government, or the pageantry of high station." He has touched perhaps what is a prevailing sentiment in the simplest state of society, when the weakness of motives suggested by interest, and the ignorance of any elevation not founded on merit, supplies the place of disdain.

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THE character of the mind, however, in this state, is not founded on ignorance alone. Men are conscious of their equality, and are tenacious of its rights. Even when they follow a leader to the field, they cannot brook the pretensions to a formal command: they listen to no orders; and they come under no military engagements, but those of mutual fidelity, and equal ardour in the enterprize*.

THIS description, we may believe, is unequally applicable to different nations, who have made unequal advances in the establishment of property. Among the Caribbees, and the other natives of the warmer climates in America, the dignity of chieftain is hereditary, or elective, and continued for life: the unequal distribution of property creates a visible subordination †. But among the Iroquois, and other nations of the temperate zone, the titles of *magistrate* and *subject*, of *noble* and *mean*, are as little known as those of *rich* and *poor*. The old men, without being invested with any coercive power, employ their natural authority in advising or in prompting the resolutions of their tribe: the military leader is pointed out by the superiority of his manhood and valour: the statesman is distinguished only by the attention with which his counsel is heard; the warrior by the confidence with which the youth of his nation follow him to the field: and if their concerts must

* Charlevoix.

† Wafer's account of the Isthmus of Darien.

be supposed to constitute a species of political government, it is one to which no language of ours can be applied. Power is no more than the natural ascendancy of the mind; the discharge of office no more than a natural exercise of the personal character; and while the community acts with an appearance of order, there is no sense of disparity in the breast of any of its members*.

IN these happy, though informal, proceedings, where age alone gives a place in the council; where youth, ardour, and valour in the field, give a title to the station of leader; where the whole community is assembled on any alarming occasion, we may venture to say, that we have found the origin of the senate, the executive power, and the assembly of the people; institutions for which ancient legislators have been so much renowned. The senate among the Greeks, as well as the Latins, appears, from the etymology of its name, to have been originally composed of elderly men. The military leader at Rome, in a manner not unlike to that of the American warrior, proclaimed his levies, and the citizen prepared for the field, in consequence of a voluntary engagement. The suggestions of nature, which directed the policy of nations in the wilds of America, were followed before on the banks of the Eurotas and the Tyber; and Lycurgus and Romulus found the model of their institutions where the members of every rude

* Colden's history of the Five Nations.



nation find the earliest mode of uniting their talents, and combining their forces.

AMONG the North-American nations, every individual is independent ; but he is engaged by his affections and his habits in the cares of a family. Families, like so many separate tribes, are subject to no inspection or government from abroad ; whatever passes at home, even bloodshed and murder, are only supposed to concern themselves. They are, in the mean time, the parts of a canton ; the women assemble to plant their maize ; the old men go to council ; the huntsman and the warrior joins the youth of his village in the field. Many such cantons assemble to constitute a national council, or to execute a national enterprize. When the Europeans made their first settlements in America, six such nations had formed a league, had their amphyciones or states-general, and, by the firmness of their union, and the ability of their councils, had obtained an ascendant from the mouth of the St Laurence to that of the Mississippi *. They appeared to understand the objects of the confederacy, as well as those of the separate nation ; they studied a balance of power ; the statesman of one country watched the designs and proceedings of another ; and occasionally threw the weight of his tribe into a different scale. They had their alliances and their treaties, which, like the nations of Europe, they maintained, or they broke, upon reasons of state ; and re-

* Lafltau, Charlevoix, Colden, &c.

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mained at peace from a sense of necessity or expediency, and went to war upon any emergence of provocation or jealousy.

THUS, without any settled form of government, or any bond of union, but what resembled more the suggestion of instinct, than the invention of reason, they conducted themselves with the concert, and the force, of nations. Foreigners, without being able to discover who is the magistrate, or in what manner the senate is composed, always find a council with whom they may treat, or a band of warriors with whom they may fight. Without police or compulsory laws, their domestic society is conducted with order, and the absence of vicious dispositions, is a better security than any public establishment for the suppression of crimes.

DISORDERS, however, sometimes occur, especially in times of debauch, when the immoderate use of intoxicating liquors, to which they are extremely addicted, suspends the ordinary caution of their demeanour, and inflaming their violent passions, engages them in quarrels and bloodshed. When a person is slain, his murderer is seldom called to an immediate account: but he has a quarrel to sustain with the family and the friends; or, if a stranger, with the countrymen of the deceased; sometimes even with his own nation at home, if the injury committed be of a kind to alarm the society. The nation, the canton, or the family, endeavour, by presents, to atone for the offence of any of their members;

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and, by pacifying the parties aggrieved, endeavour to prevent what alarms the community more than the first disorder, the subsequent effects of revenge and animosity *. The shedding of blood, however, if the guilty person remain where he has committed the crime, seldom escapes unpunished: the friend of the deceased knows how to disguise, though not to suppress, his resentment; and even after many years have elapsed, is sure to repay the injury that was done to his kindred or his house.

THESE considerations render them cautious and circumspect, put them on their guard against their passions, and give to their ordinary deportment an air of phlegm and composure superior to what is possessed among polished nations. They are, in the mean time, affectionate in their carriage, and in their conversations pay a mutual attention and regard, says Charlevoix, more tender and more engaging, than what we profess in the ceremonial of polished societies.

THIS writer has observed, that the nations among whom he travelled in North America, never mentioned acts of generosity or kindness under the notion of duty. They acted from affection, as they acted from appetite, without regard to its consequences. When they had done a kindness, they had gratified a desire; the business was fi-

* Lafitau.

nished,



nished, and it passed from the memory. When they received a favour, it might, or it might not, prove the occasion of friendship: if it did not, the parties appeared to have no apprehensions of gratitude, as a duty by which the one was bound to make a return, or the other intitled to reproach the person who had failed in his part. The spirit with which they give or receive presents, is the same which Tacitus observed among the ancient Germans: They delight in them, but do not consider them as matter of obligation *. Such gifts are of little consequence, except when employed as the seal of a bargain or treaty.

IT was their favourite maxim, That no man is naturally indebted to another; that he is not, therefore, obliged to bear with any imposition, or unequal treatment †. Thus, in a principle apparently fullen and inhospitable, they have discovered the foundation of justice, and observe its rules, with a steadiness and candour which no cultivation has been found to improve. The freedom which they give in what relates to the supposed duties of kindness and friendship, serves only to engage the heart more entirely, where it is once possessed with affection. We love to chuse our object without any restraint, and we consider kindness itself as a task, when the duties of friendship are exacted by rule. We therefore, by our demand for attentions, rather corrupt than improve the

* *Muneribus gaudent, sed nec data imputant, nec acceptis obligantur.*

† Charlevoix.

system.



system of morality; and by our exactions of gratitude, and our frequent proposals to enforce its observance, we only shew, that we have mistaken its nature; we only give symptoms of that growing sensibility to interest, from which we measure the expediency of friendship and generosity itself; and by which we would introduce the spirit of traffic into the commerce of affection. In consequence of this proceeding, we are often obliged to decline a favour with the same spirit that we throw off a servile engagement, or reject a bribe. To the unrefining savage every favour is welcome, and every present received without reserve or reflection.

THE love of equality, and the love of justice, were originally the same: and although, by the constitution of different societies, unequal privileges are bestowed on their members; and although justice itself requires a proper regard to be paid to such privileges; yet he who has forgotten that men were originally equal, easily degenerates into a slave; or in the capacity of a master, is not to be trusted with the rights of his fellow-creatures. This happy principle gives to the mind its sense of independence, renders it indifferent to the favours which are in the power of other men, checks it in the commission of injuries, and leaves the heart open to the affections of generosity and kindness. It gives to the untutored American that air of candour, and of regard to the welfare of others, which, in some degree, softens the arrogant pride of his carriage, and in times of confidence and
peace,



peace, without the assistance of government or law, renders the approach and commerce of strangers secure.

AMONG this people, the foundations of honour are eminent abilities and great fortitude; not the distinctions of equipage and fortune: The talents in esteem are such as their situation leads them to employ, the exact knowledge of a country, and stratagem in war. On these qualifications, a captain among the Caribbees underwent an examination. When a new leader was to be chosen, a scout was sent forth to traverse the forests which led to the enemy's country, and, upon his return, the candidate was desired to find the track in which he had travelled. A brook, or a fountain, was named to him on the frontier, and he was desired to find the nearest path to a particular station, and to plant a stake in the place*. They can, accordingly, trace a wild beast, or the human foot, over many leagues of a pathless forest, and find their way across a woody and uninhabited continent, by means of refined observations, which escape the traveller who has been accustomed to different aids. They steer in slender canoes, across stormy seas, with a dexterity equal to that of the most experienced pilot †. They carry a penetrating eye for the thoughts and intentions of those with whom they have to deal; and when they mean to deceive, they cover themselves with arts which the most subtle can seldom elude. They harangue in their public

* Latfiau.

† Charlevoix.

councils



councils with a nervous and figurative elocution; and conduct themselves in the management of their treaties with a perfect discernment of their national interests.

THUS being able masters in the detail of their own affairs, and well qualified to acquit themselves on particular occasions, they study no science, and go in pursuit of no general principles. They even seem incapable of attending to any distant consequences, beyond those they have experienced in hunting or war. They intrust the provision of every season to itself; consume the fruits of the earth in summer; and, in winter, are driven in quest of their prey, through woods, and over deserts covered with snow. They do not form in one hour those maxims which may prevent the errors of the next; and they fail in those apprehensions, which, in the intervals of passion, produce ingenuous shame, compassion, remorse, or a command of appetite. They are seldom made to repent of any violence; nor is a person, indeed, thought accountable in his sober mood, for what he did in the heat of a passion, or in a time of debauch.

THEIR superstitions are groveling and mean: and did this happen among rude nations alone, we could not sufficiently admire the effects of politeness; but it is a subject on which few nations are intitled to censure their neighbours. When we have considered the superstitions of one people, we find little variety in those of another. They are but a repetition of similar weaknesses and absurdities, derived from a common source, a perplexed apprehension



vidence operating by physical causes, in the place of phantoms that terrify or amuse the ignorant.

THE principal point of honour among the rude nations of America, as indeed in every instance where mankind are not greatly corrupted, is fortitude. Yet their way of maintaining this point of honour, is very different from that of the nations of Europe. Their ordinary method of making war is by ambuscade; and they strive, by overreaching an enemy, to commit the greatest slaughter, or to make the greatest number of prisoners, with the least hazard to themselves. They deem it a folly to expose their own persons in assaulting an enemy, and do not rejoice in victories which are stained with the blood of their own people. They do not value themselves, as in Europe, on defying their enemy upon equal terms. They even boast, that they approach like foxes, or that they fly like birds, not less than that they devour like lions. In Europe, to fall in battle is accounted an honour; among the natives of America, it is reckoned disgraceful*. They reserve their fortitude for the trials they abide when attacked by surprise, or when fallen into their enemies hands; and when they are obliged to maintain their own honour, and that of their nation, in the midst of torments that require efforts of patience more than of valour.

ON these occasions, they are far from allowing it to be supposed that they wish to decline the conflict. It is held infamous to avoid it, even by a voluntary death; and the greatest affront which can be offered to a prisoner, is to

* Charlevoix.

refuse



refuse him the honours of a man, in the manner of his execution: "With-hold," says an old man, in the midst of his torture, "the stabs of your knife; rather let me die by fire, that those dogs, your allies, from beyond the seas, may learn to suffer like men *." With terms of defiance, the victim, in those solemn trials, commonly excites the animosity of his tormentors, as well as his own; and whilst we suffer for human nature, under the effect of its errors, we must admire its force.

THE people with whom this practice prevailed, were commonly desirous of repairing their own losses, by adopting prisoners of war into their families: and even in the last moment, the hand which was raised to torment, frequently gave the sign of adoption, by which the prisoner became the child or the brother of his enemy, and came to share in all the privileges of a citizen. In their treatment of those who suffered, they did not appear to be guided by principles of hatred or revenge: they observed the point of honour in applying as well as in bearing their torments; and, by a strange kind of affection and tenderness, were directed to be most cruel where they intended the highest respect: the coward was put to immediate death by the hands of women: the valiant was supposed to be intitled to all the trials of fortitude that men could invent or employ: "It gave me joy," says an old man to his captive, "that so gallant a youth was allotted to my

* Colden.



“ share: I propos’d to have plac’d you on the couch of
 “ my nephew, who was slain by your countrymen; to
 “ have transfer’d all my tenderneſs to you; and to
 “ have plac’d my age in your company: but maimed
 “ and mutilated as you now appear, death is better
 “ than life: prepare yourſelf therefore to die like a
 “ man *.”

IT is perhaps with a view to theſe exhibitions, or rather in admiration of fortitude, the principle from which they proceed, that the Americans are ſo attentive, in their earlieſt years, to harden their nerves †. The children are taught to vie with each other in bearing the ſharpeſt torments; the youth are admitted into the claſs of manhood, after violent proofs of their patience; and leaders are put to the teſt, by famine, burning, and ſuffocation ‡.

IT might be apprehended, that among rude nations, where the means of ſubſiſtence are procur’d with ſo much difficulty, the mind could never raiſe itſelf above the conſideration of this ſubject; and that man would, in this condition, give examples of the meaneſt and moſt mercenary ſpirit. The reverſe, however, is true. Directed in this particular by the deſires of nature, men,

* Charlevoix.

† *Ib.* This writer ſays, that he has ſeen a boy and a girl, having bound their naked arms together, place a burning coal between them, to try who would ſhake it off firſt.

‡ Laſtau.



in their simplest state, attend to the objects of appetite no further than appetite requires; and their desires of fortune extend no further than the meal which gratifies their hunger: they apprehend no superiority of rank in the possession of wealth, such as might inspire any habitual principle of covetousness, vanity, or ambition: they can apply to no task that engages no immediate passion, and take pleasure in no occupation that affords no dangers to be braved, and no honours to be won.

IT was not among the ancient Romans alone that commercial arts, or a sordid mind, were held in contempt. A like spirit prevails in every rude and independent society. "I am a warrior, and not a merchant," said an American to the governor of Canada, who proposed to give him goods in exchange for some prisoners he had taken; "your cloaths and utensils do not tempt me; but my prisoners are now in your power, and you may seize them: if you do, I must go forth and take more prisoners, or perish in the attempt; and if that chance should befall me, I shall die like a man; but remember, that our nation will charge you as the cause of my death*." With these apprehensions, they have an elevation, and a stateliness of carriage, which the pride of nobility, where it is most revered by polished nations, seldom bestows.

* Charlevoix.

THEY



THEY are attentive to their persons, and employ much time, as well as endure great pain, in the methods they take to adorn their bodies, to give the permanent stains with which they are coloured, or preserve the paint, which they are perpetually repairing, in order to appear with advantage.

THEIR aversion to every sort of employment which they hold to be mean, makes them pass great part of their time in idleness or sleep; and a man who, in pursuit of a wild beast, or to surprize his enemy, will traverse a hundred leagues on snow, will not, to procure his food, submit to any species of ordinary labour. "Strange," says Tacitus, "that the same person should be so much averse to repose, and so much addicted to sloth."

GAMES of hazard are not the invention of polished ages; men of curiosity have looked for their origin, in vain, among the monuments of an obscure antiquity; and it is probable that they belonged to times too remote and too rude even for the conjectures of antiquarians to reach. The very savage brings his furs, his utensils, and his beads, to the hazard-table: he finds here the passions and agitations which the applications of a tedious industry could not excite: and while the throw is depending, he tears his hair, and beats his breast, with a rage which the more accomplished gamester has sometimes learned to repress: he often quits the party naked, and stripped of all his possessions; or where
flavery

slavery is in use, stakes his freedom to have one chance more to recover his former loss *.

WITH all these infirmities, vices, or respectable qualities, belonging to the human species in its rudest state; the love of society, friendship, and public affection, penetration, eloquence, and courage, appear to have been its original properties, not the subsequent effects of device or invention. If mankind are qualified to improve their manners, the subject was furnished by nature; and the effect of cultivation is not to inspire the sentiments of tenderness and generosity, nor to bestow the principal constituents of a respectable character, but to obviate the casual abuses of passion; and to prevent a mind, which feels the best dispositions in their greatest force, from being at times likewise the sport of brutal appetite and ungovernable violence.

WERE Lycurgus employed anew to operate on the materials we have described, he would find them, in many important particulars, prepared by nature herself for his use. His equality in matters of property being already established, he would have no faction to apprehend from the opposite interests of the poor and the rich; his senate, his assembly of the people, is constituted; his discipline is in some measure adopted; and the place of his helots is supplied by the task allotted to one of the sexes. With all these advantages, he would still

* Tacitus, Lafitau, Charlevoix.

have



have had a very important lesson for civil society to teach, that by which a few learn to command, and the many are taught to obey: he would have all his precautions to take against the future intrusion of mercenary arts, the admiration of luxury, and the passion for interest: he would still perhaps have a more difficult task than any of the former, in teaching his citizens the command of appetite, and an indifference to pleasure, as well as a contempt of pain; in teaching them to maintain, in the field, the formality of uniform precautions, and as much to avoid being themselves surpris'd, as they endeavour to surpris'e their enemy.

FOR want of these advantages, rude nations in general, though they are patient of hardship and fatigue, though they are addicted to war, and are qualified by their stratagem and valour to throw terror into the armies of a more regular enemy; yet, in the course of a continued struggle, always yield to the superior arts, and the discipline of more civilized nations. Hence the Romans were able to over-run the provinces of Gaul, Germany, and Britain; and hence the Europeans have a growing ascendancy over the nations of Africa and America.

ON the credit of a superiority which certain nations possess, they think that they have a claim to dominion; and even Cæsar appears to have forgotten what were the passions, as well as the rights of mankind, when he
complained,

complained, that the Britons, after having sent him a submissive message to Gaul, perhaps to prevent his invasion, still pretended to fight for their liberties, and to oppose his descent on their island *.

THERE is not, perhaps, in the whole description of mankind, a circumstance more remarkable than that mutual contempt and aversion which nations, under a different state of commercial arts, bestow on each other. Addicted to their own pursuits, and considering their own condition as the standard of human felicity, all nations pretend to the preference, and in their practice give sufficient proof of sincerity. Even the savage still less than the citizen, can be made to quit that manner of life in which he is trained: he loves that freedom of mind which will not be bound to any task, and which owns no superior: however tempted to mix with polished nations, and to better his fortune, the first moment of liberty brings him back to the woods again; he droops and he pines in the streets of the populous city; he wanders dissatisfied over the open and the cultivated field; he seeks the frontier and the forest, where, with a constitution prepared to undergo the hardships and the difficulties of the situation, he enjoys a delicious freedom from care, and a sedu-

* Cæsar questus, quod quum ultro in continentem legatis missis pacem a se petissent, bellum sine causa intulissent. *Lib. 4.*

T

cing



cing society, where no rules of behaviour are prescribed, but the simple dictates of the heart.

S E C T. III.

Of Rude Nations under the Impressions of Property and Interest.

IT was a proverbial imprecation in use among the hunting nations on the confines of Siberia, That their enemy might be obliged to live like a Tartar, and be seized with the folly of breeding and attending his cattle *. Nature, it seems, in their apprehension, by storing the woods and the desert with game, rendered the task of the herdsman unnecessary, and left to man only the trouble of selecting and of seizing his prey.

THE indolence of mankind, or rather their aversion to any application in which they are not engaged by immediate instinct and passion, retards their progress in extending the notion of property. It has been found, however, even while the means of subsistence are left in common, and the stock of the public is yet undivided, that this notion is already applied to different subjects; as the fur and the bow pertain to the in-

* Abulgaze's Genealogical History of the Tartars.

dividual;



dividual; the cottage, with its furniture, are appropriated to the family.

WHEN the parent begins to desire a better provision for his children than is found under the promiscuous management of many copartners, when he has applied his labour and his skill apart, he aims at an exclusive possession, and seeks the property of the soil, as well as the use of its fruits.

WHEN the individual no longer finds among his associates the same inclination to commit every subject to public use, he is seized with concern for his personal fortune; and is alarmed by the cares which every person entertains for himself. He is urged as much by emulation and jealousy, as by the sense of necessity. He suffers considerations of interest to rest on his mind, and when every present appetite is sufficiently gratified, he can act with a view to futurity, or rather finds an object of vanity in having amassed what is become a subject of competition, and a matter of universal esteem. Upon this motive, where violence is restrained, he can apply his hand to lucrative arts, confine himself to a tedious task, and wait with patience for the distant returns of his labour.

THUS mankind acquire industry by many and by slow degrees. They are taught to regard their interest; they are taught to abstain from unlawful profits; they are secured in the possession of what they fairly obtain; and by these methods the habits of the labourer, the mechanic, and the trader, are gradually formed. A hoard,



collected from the simple productions of nature, or a herd of cattle, are, in every rude nation, the first species of wealth. The circumstances of the soil, and the climate, determine whether the inhabitant shall apply himself chiefly to agriculture or pasture; whether he shall fix his residence, or be moving continually about with all his possessions.

IN the west of Europe; in America, from south to north, with a few exceptions; in the torrid zone, and every where within the warmer climates; mankind have generally applied themselves to some species of agriculture, and have been disposed to settlement. In the east and the north of Asia, they depended entirely on their herds, and were perpetually shifting their ground in search of new pasture. The arts which pertain to settlement have been practised, and variously cultivated, by the inhabitants of Europe. Those which are consistent with perpetual migration, have, from the earliest accounts of history, remained nearly the same with the Scythian or Tartar. The tent pitched on a moveable carriage, the horse applied to every purpose of labour, and of war, of the dairy, and of the butcher's stall, from the earliest to the latest accounts, have made up the riches and equipage of this wandering people.

BUT in whatever way rude nations subsist, there are certain points in which, under the first impressions of property, they nearly agree. Homer either lived with a people in this stage of their progress, or found himself engaged to exhibit their character. Tacitus has made them the subject of a particular treatise; and if this be an aspect



spect under which mankind deserve to be viewed, it must be confessed, that we have singular advantages in collecting their features. The portrait has already been drawn by the ablest hands, and gives, at one view, in the writings of these celebrated authors, whatever has been scattered in the relations of historians, or whatever we have opportunities to observe in the actual manners of men, who still remain in a similar state.

IN passing from the condition we have described, to this we have at present in view, mankind still retain many parts of their earliest character. They are still averse to labour, addicted to war, admirers of fortitude, and, in the language of Tacitus, more lavish of their blood than of their sweat *. They are fond of fantastic ornaments in their dress, and endeavour to fill up the listless intervals of a life addicted to violence, with hazardous sports, and with games of chance. Every servile occupation they commit to women or slaves. But we may apprehend, that the individual having now found a separate interest, the bands of society must become less firm, and domestic disorders more frequent. The members of any community, being distinguished among themselves by unequal shares in the distribution of property, the ground of a permanent and palpable subordination is laid.

THESE particulars accordingly take place among mankind, in passing from the savage to what may be

* *Pigrum quin immo et iners videtur, sudore acquirere quod possis sanguine parare.*

called



called the barbarous state. Members of the same community enter into quarrels of competition or revenge. They unite in following leaders, who are distinguished by their fortunes, and by the lustre of their birth. They join the desire of spoil with the love of glory; and from an opinion, that what is acquired by force, justly pertains to the victor, they become hunters of men, and bring every contest to the decision of the sword.

EVERY nation is a band of robbers, who prey without restraint, or remorse, on their neighbours. Cattle, says Achilles, may be seized in every field; and the coasts of the Ægean sea were accordingly pillaged by the heroes of Homer, for no other reason, than because those heroes chose to possess themselves of the brass and iron, the cattle, the slaves, and the women, which were found among the nations around them.

A Tartar mounted on his horse, is an animal of prey, who only inquires where cattle are to be found, and how far he must go to possess them. The monk, who had fallen under the displeasure of Mangu Chan, made his peace, by promising, that the Pope, and the Christian princes, should make a surrender of all their herds*.

A similar spirit reigned, without exception, in all the barbarous nations of Europe, Asia, and Africa. The

* Rubraquis.



antiquities of Greece and Italy, and the fables of every ancient poet, contain examples of its force. It was this spirit that brought our ancestors first into the provinces of the Roman empire; and that afterward, more perhaps than their reverence for the cross, led them to the East, to share with the Tartars in the spoils of the Saracen empire.

FROM the descriptions contained in the last section, we may incline to believe, that mankind, in their simplest state, are on the eve of erecting republics. Their love of equality, their habit of assembling in public councils, and their zeal for the tribe to which they belong, are qualifications that fit them to act under that species of government; and they seem to have but a few steps to make, in order to reach its establishment. They have only to define the numbers of which their councils shall consist, and to settle the forms of their meeting: They have only to bestow a permanent authority for repressing disorders, and to enact a few rules in favour of that justice they have already acknowledged, and from inclination so strictly observe.

BUT these steps are far from being so easily made, as they appear on a slight or a transient view. The resolution of chusing, from among their equals, the magistrate to whom they give from thenceforward a right to controul their own actions, is far from the thoughts of simple men; and no eloquence, perhaps, could make them

them



them adopt this measure, or give them any sense of its use.

EVEN after nations have chosen a military leader, they do not intrust him with any species of civil authority. The captain, among the Caribbees, did not pretend to decide in domestic disputes; the terms *jurisdiction* and *government* were unknown in their tongue*.

BEFORE this important change is admitted, men must be accustomed to the distinction of ranks; and before they are sensible that subordination is matter of choice, must arrive at unequal conditions by chance. In desiring property, they only mean to secure their subsistence: but the brave who lead in war, have likewise the largest share in its spoils. The eminent are fond of devising hereditary honours; and the multitude, who admire the parent, are ready to extend their esteem to his offspring.

POSSESSIONS descend, and the lustre of family grows brighter with age. Hercules, who perhaps was an eminent warrior, became a god with posterity, and his race was set apart for royalty and sovereign power. When the distinctions of fortune and those of birth are conjoined, the chieftain enjoys a pre-eminence, as well at the feast as in the field. His followers take their place in subordinate stations; and instead of considering them-

* History of the Caribbees.

elves

As parts of a community, they rank as the followers of a chieftain, and take their designation from the name of their leader. They find a new object of public affection, in defending his person, and in supporting his station; they lend of their substance to form his estate; they are guided by his smiles and his frowns; and court, as the highest distinction, a share in the feast which their own contributions have furnished.

As the former state of mankind seemed to point at democracy, this seems to exhibit the rudiments of monarchical government. But it is yet far short of that establishment which is known in after ages by the name of *monarchy*. The distinction between the leader and the follower, the prince and the subject, is still but imperfectly marked: their pursuits and occupations are not different; their minds are not unequally cultivated; they feed from the same dish; they sleep together on the ground; the children of the king, as well as those of the subject, are employed in tending the flock; and the keeper of the swine was a prime counsellor at the court of Ulysses.

THE chieftain, sufficiently distinguished from his tribe, to excite their admiration, and to flatter their vanity by a supposed affinity to his noble descent, is the object of their veneration, not of their envy: he is considered as the common bond of connection, not as their common master; is foremost in danger, and has a principal share in their troubles: his glory is placed in the number

U ber



ber of his attendants, in his superior magnanimity and valour; that of his followers, in being ready to shed their blood in his service*.

THE frequent practice of war tends to strengthen the bands of society, and the practice of depredation itself engages men in trials of mutual attachment and courage. What threatened to ruin and overset every good disposition in the human breast, what seemed to banish justice from the societies of men, tends to unite the species in clans and fraternities; formidable, indeed, and hostile to one another, but in the domestic society of each, faithful, disinterested, and generous. Frequent dangers, and the experience of fidelity and valour, awaken the love of those virtues, render them a subject of admiration, and endear their possessors.

ACTUATED by great passions, the love of glory, and the desire of victory; roused by the menaces of an enemy, or stung with revenge; in suspense between the prospects of ruin or conquest, the barbarian spends every moment of relaxation in the indulgence of sloth. He cannot descend to the pursuits of industry or mechanical labour: the beast of prey is a sluggard; the hunter and the warrior sleeps, while women or slaves are made to toil for his bread. But shew him a quarry at a distance, he is bold, impetuous, artful, and rapacious: no

* Tacitus de moribus Germanorum.



bar can withstand his violence, and no fatigue can allay his activity.

EVEN under this description mankind are generous and hospitable to strangers, as well as kind, affectionate, and gentle, in their domestic society *. Friendship and enmity are to them terms of the greatest importance: they mingle not their functions together; they have singled out their enemy, and they have chosen their friend. Even in depredation, the principal object is glory; and spoil is considered as a badge of victory. Nations and tribes are their prey: the solitary traveller, by whom they can acquire only the reputation of generosity, is suffered to pass unhurt, or is treated with splendid munificence.

THOUGH distinguished into small cantons under their several chieftains, and for the most part separated by jealousy and animosity; yet when pressed by wars and formidable enemies, they sometimes unite in greater bodies. Like the Greeks in their expedition to Troy, they follow some remarkable leader, and compose a kingdom of many separate tribes. But such coalitions are merely occasional; and even during their continuance, more resemble republic than monarchy. The inferior chieftains reserve their importance, and intrude, with an air of equality, into the councils of their leader, as the people of

* Jean du Plan Carpen. Rubruquis, Cæsar, Tacit.



their several clans commonly intrude upon them *. Upon what motive indeed could we suppose, that men who live together in the greatest familiarity, and amongst whom the distinctions of rank are so obscurely marked, would resign their personal sentiments and inclinations, or pay an implicit submission to a leader who can neither overawe nor corrupt ?

MILITARY force must be employed to extort, or the hire of the venal to buy, that engagement which the Tartar comes under to his prince, when he promises, " That he will go where he shall be commanded ; that he will come when he shall be called ; that he will kill whoever is pointed out to him ; and, for the future, that he will consider the voice of the King as a sword †."

THESE are the terms to which even the stubborn heart of the barbarian has been reduced, in consequence of a despotism he himself had established ; and men have, in that low state of the commercial arts, in Europe, as well as in Asia, tasted of political slavery. When interest prevails in every breast, the sovereign and his party cannot escape the infection : he employs the force with which he is intrusted, to turn his people into a property, and to command their possessions for his profit or his

* Kolbe ; Description of the Cape of Good Hope.

† Simon de St Quintin.

pleasure.



pleasure. If riches are by any people made the standard of good and of evil, let them beware of the powers they intrust to their prince. "With the Suiones," says Tacitus, riches are in high esteem; and this people are "accordingly disarmed, and reduced to slavery*."

IT is in this woful condition that mankind, being slavish, interested, insidious, deceitful, and bloody, bears marks, if not of the least curable, surely of the most lamentable, sort of corruption †. Among them, war is the mere practice of rapine, to enrich the individual; commerce is turned into a system of snares and impositions; and government by turns oppressive or weak.

IT were happy for the human race, when guided by interest, and not governed by laws, that being split into nations of a moderate extent, they found in every canton some natural bar to its further enlargement, and met with occupation enough in maintaining their independence, without being able to extend their dominion.

THERE is not disparity of rank, among men in rude ages, sufficient to give their communities the form of legal monarchy; and in a territory of considerable extent, when united under one head, the warlike and turbulent spirit of its inhabitants seems to require the bridle of despotism and military force. Where any degree of

* De moribus Germanorum.

† Chardin's Travels.

freedom



freedom remains, the powers of the prince are, as they were in most of the rude monarchies of Europe, extremely precarious, and depend chiefly on his personal character: where, on the contrary, the powers of the prince are above the control of his people, they are likewise above the restrictions of law. Rapacity and terror become the predominant motives of conduct, and form the character of the only parties into which mankind are divided, that of the oppressor, and that of the oppressed.

THIS calamity threatened Europe for ages, under the conquest and settlement of its new inhabitants *. It has actually taken place in Asia, where similar conquests have been made; and even without the ordinary opiates of effeminacy, or a servile weakness, founded on luxury, it has surpris'd the Tartar on his wain, in the rear of his herds. Among this people, in the heart of a great continent, bold and enterprising warriors arose: they subdued, by surpris'e, or superior abilities, the contiguous hords; they gained, in their progress, accessions of numbers and of strength; and, like a torrent increasing as it descends, became too strong for any bar that could be oppos'd to their passage. The conquering tribe, during a succession of ages, furnished the prince with his guards; and while they themselves were allowed to share

* See Hume's history of the Tudors. — There seem'd to be nothing wanting to establish a perfect despotism in that house, but a few regiments of troops under the command of the crown.



in its spoils, were the voluntary tools of oppression. In this manner has despotism and corruption made their way into regions so much renowned for the wild freedom of nature: a power which was the terror of every effeminate province is disarmed, and the nursery of nations is itself gone to decay*.

WHERE rude nations escape this calamity, they require the exercise of foreign wars to maintain domestic peace: when no enemy appears from abroad, they have leisure for private feuds, and employ that courage in their dissensions at home, which, in time of war, is employed in defence of their country.

“AMONG the Gauls,” says Cæsar, “there are subdivisions, not only in every nation, and in every district and village, but almost in every house, every one must fly to some patron for protection †.” In this distribution of parties, not only the feuds of clans, but the quarrels of families, even the differences and competitions of individuals, are decided by force. The sovereign, when unassisted by superstition, endeavours in vain to employ his jurisdiction, or to procure a submission to the decisions of law. By a people who are accustomed to owe their possessions to violence, and who despise fortune itself without the reputation of courage,

* See the History of the Huns.

† De Bello Gallico, lib. 6.



no umpire is admitted but the sword. Scipio offered his arbitration to terminate the competition of two Spaniards in a disputed succession: "That," said they, "we have already refused to our relations: we do not submit our difference to the judgement of men; and even among the gods, we appeal to Mars alone *."

It is well known that the nations of Europe carried this mode of proceeding to a degree of formality unheard of in other parts of the world: the civil and criminal judge could, in most cases, do no more than appoint the lists, and leave the parties to decide their cause by the combat: they apprehended that the victor had a verdict of the gods in his favour: and when they dropped in any instance this extraordinary form of process, they substituted in its place some other more capricious appeal to chance; in which they likewise thought that the judgement of the gods was declared.

THE fierce nations of Europe were even fond of the combat as an exercise and a sport. In the absence of real quarrels, companions challenged each other to a trial of skill, in which one of them frequently perished. When Scipio celebrated the funeral of his father and his uncle, the Spaniards came in pairs to fight, and, by a public exhibition of their duels, to increase the solemnity †.

* Livy.

† Ib. lib. 3.



IN this wild and lawless state, where the effects of true religion would have been so desirable, and so salutary, superstition frequently disputes the ascendant even with the admiration of valour; and an order of men, like the Druids among the ancient Gauls and Britons *, or some pretender to divination, as at the Cape of Good Hope, finds, in the credit which is paid to his sorcery, a way to the possession of power: his magic wand comes in competition with the sword itself; and, in the manner of the Druids, gives the first rudiments of civil government to some, or, like the supposed descendent of the sun among the Natchez, and the Lama among the Tartars, to others, an early taste of despotism and absolute slavery.

WE are generally at a loss to conceive how mankind can subsist under customs and manners extremely different from our own; and we are apt to exaggerate the misery of barbarous times, by an imagination of what we ourselves should suffer in a situation to which we are not accustomed. But every age hath its consolations, as well as its sufferings †. In the interval of occasional out-
rages,

* Cæsar. *How easy it is to live with the savages of barbarous*

† Priscus, when employed on an embassy to Attila, was accosted in Greek, by a person who wore the dress of a Scythian. Having expressed surprise, and being desirous to know the cause of his stay in so wild a company, was told, that this Greek had been a captive, and for some time a slave, till he obtained his liberty in reward of some remarkable action. "I live more happily here," says he, "than ever I did under the Roman government: for they who live with the Scythians, if they can endure



rages, the friendly intercourses of men, even in their rudest condition, is affectionate and happy *. In rude ages, the persons and properties of individuals are secure; because each has a friend, as well as an enemy; and if the one is disposed to molest, the other is ready to protect; and the very admiration of valour, which in some instances tends to sanctify violence, inspires likewise certain maxims of generosity and honour, that tend to prevent the commission of wrongs.

MEN bear with the defects of their policy, as they do with hardships and inconveniencies in their manner of living. The alarms and the fatigues of war become a necessary recreation to those who are accustomed to them, and who have the tone of their passions raised above less animating or trying occasions. Old men, among the courtiers of Attila, wept, when they heard of heroic deeds, which they themselves could no longer perform †. And among the Celtic nations, when age rendered the

“ the fatigues of war, have nothing else to molest them; they enjoy their
 “ possessions undisturbed: whereas you are continually a prey to foreign
 “ enemies, or to bad government; you are forbid to carry arms in your own
 “ defence; you suffer from the remissness and ill conduct of those who are
 “ appointed to protect you; the evils of peace are even worse than those of
 “ war; no punishment is ever inflicted on the powerful or the rich; no
 “ mercy is shown to the poor; although your institutions were wisely devi-
 “ sed, yet in the management of corrupted men, their effects are pernicious
 “ and cruel.” *Excerpta de legationibus.*

* D' Arvieux's Hist. of the Wild Arabs.

† Ibid.

warrior



warrior unfit for his former toils, it was the custom, in order to abridge the languors of a listless and inactive life, to sue for death at the hands of his friends*.

WITH all this ferocity of spirit, the rude nations of the West were subdued by the policy and more regular warfare of the Romans. The point of honour, which the barbarians of Europe adopted as individuals, exposed them to a peculiar disadvantage, by rendering them, even in their national wars, averse to assailing their enemy by surprise, or taking the benefit of stratagem; and though separately bold and intrepid, yet, like other rude nations, they were, when assembled in great bodies, addicted to superstition, and subject to panics.

THEY were, from a consciousness of their personal courage and force, sanguine on the eve of battle; they were, beyond the bounds of moderation, elated on success, and dejected in adversity; and being disposed to consider every event as a judgement of the gods, they were never qualified by an uniform application of prudence, to make the most of their forces, to repair their misfortunes, or to improve their advantages.

* Ubi transcendit florentes viribus annos,
Impatiens ævi spernit novissæ senectam.

Silius, lib. 1. 225.



RESIGNED to the government of affection and passion, they were generous and faithful where they had fixed an attachment; implacable, froward, and cruel, where they had conceived a dislike: addicted to debauchery, and the immoderate use of intoxicating liquors, they deliberated on the affairs of state in the heat of their riot; and in the same dangerous moments, conceived the designs of military enterprize, or terminated their domestic dissensions by the dagger or the sword.

IN their wars they preferred death to captivity. The victorious armies of the Romans, in entering a town by assault, or inforcing an incampment, have found the mother in the act of destroying her children, that they might not be taken; and the dagger of the parent, red with the blood of his family, ready to be plunged at last into his own breast*.

IN all these particulars we perceive that vigour of spirit, which renders disorder itself respectable, and which qualifies men, if fortunate in their situation, to lay the basis of domestic liberty, as well as to maintain against foreign enemies their national independence and freedom.

* Liv. lib. xli. 11. Dio Cass.

PART

